

Connections in Commonwealth Education

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These two sessions are being organised by the Commonwealth Consortium for Education which groups two dozen civil-society organisations committed to education development and education co-operation in the Commonwealth.

The Consortium has long argued for the Commonwealth to adopt a more holistic approach to education development than is implied by a narrow emphasis on the Millennium Development Goals in education. A wider vision of access is required that, while recommitting to the MDGs, recognises that a majority of Commonwealth countries has already substantially achieved these goals and that all countries must in any case simultaneously grapple with complex challenges in post-primary education. A holistic approach emphasises the links between education and other sectors; the importance of early childhood education, literacy and skill development as essential parts of the Dakar EFA agenda; the crucial interconnections between primary and other levels of education; the complementary nature of in-school and out-of-school and open learning; and the importance of the post-primary education agenda.

At the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM) in Kuala Lumpur in June 2009, Member Countries will be celebrating 50 years of Commonwealth education co-operation since the first such conference in Oxford. It will be an opportunity to take stock and look to the future. PCF5 is well placed to help to set the agenda for new initiatives and vision in education collaboration.

The programme will comprise two linked sessions of 90 minutes each:

1. *A holistic approach to education in the Commonwealth* introduced by Dr Narciso Matos, President of the Foundation for Community Development in Mozambique. How the different levels and modes of education should be seen as complementing, rather than competing with one another: and how education links with livelihoods and skill development, with health and wellbeing, and with promotion of values of democracy and social cohesion.
2. *Harmonising efforts in Commonwealth education co-operation*. A panel discussion by prominent educators from different regions of the Commonwealth. Can the main inter-governmental, bilateral, business, and civil-society actors work more productively together in pursuit of collective education goals? What opportunities are open to Commonwealth Ministers at 17CCEM? What main messages do we have for them?